

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
ANNUAL REPORT 2010



*Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks*



Fish Creek Wildlife Management Area and state park

Montana For Montanans

The legacy of public lands for present and future generations of Montanans was a bright spot for FWP in 2010. Numerous private, state, and federal partners collaborated with the Governor's Office and FWP Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks to acquire, and in a few cases donate, important wildlife habitat and recreational land.

Generations of Montanans will benefit from increased access to hunting, fishing and all forms of outdoor recreation, as well as from the accompanying boost these activities bring to local economies.

One example, the new Fish Creek WMA and State Park, 40 miles west of Missoula, encompasses 40,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat and 66 miles of riparian habitat. Fish Creek and its tributaries support the strongest runs of bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout within the middle Clark Fork watershed. A 6,200 acre state park will provide camping, hiking, hunting, angling, wildlife viewing, ATV trails and more. Alberton Gorge, with first-rate whitewater floating opportunities, is nearby. Funding sources included Habitat Montana, Pittman-Robertson funds, The Nature Conservancy and Access Montana.

Marshall Creek Wildlife Management Area, north of Seeley Lake, is also outstanding habitat, especially for spawning bull trout, grizzly bears and lynx. The acquisition of this property has the support of Missoula County Commissioners, the Seeley-Swan ATV Club, and Pyramid Mountain Lumber. Funding partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Services, FWP and the Blackfoot Challenge.

These vital lands, and other sites acquired in 2010, signal the appreciation that private citizens, county commissioners, landowners, state and federal agencies have for Montana's legacy of healthy wildlife communities with ready access for all Montanans.

Joe Maurier
Director, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Brian Schweitzer
Governor, State of Montana



Inspect. Clean. Dry

Montana took the need to protect our waters from aquatic invasive species to the public in 2010. FWP and the Montana Department of Agriculture raised public awareness with billboards, bumper stickers, and radio PSA's that urged water recreators to "Inspect. Clean. Dry" their gear. Aquatic invasive species can take over lake and river ecosystems, kill native fish, ruin recreational and industrial equipment, and clog irrigation canals and pipes.

River Rejuvenation

On the Blackfoot River, volunteers annually clean up the lower 13 miles of the river upstream of Missoula. FWP estimates this stretch of the river hosts nearly 40,000 "user-days" each year. Volunteers have also removed thousands of pounds of trash in the past few years from the lower Clark Fork River at Alberton Gorge, the Bitterroot River from Painted Rocks Reservoir to Florence, the Madison and Yellowstone rivers and the Missouri River downstream from Holter Dam.

Bighorn Die Off

FWP responded to pneumonia outbreaks in five bighorn sheep populations in west-central Montana including herds at East Fork, Bonner, Upper and Lower Rock Creek and Anaconda. Biologists and wardens killed dying sheep to save healthy sheep before they could be infected, and were rewarded with a crop of healthy lambs in the East Fork of

the Bitterroot. Attempts to do the same in the other infected populations weren't as successful and it may be years before bighorns rebound to previous levels.

Weed Management

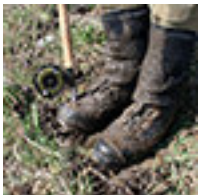
Noxious weed management on FWP-managed properties, public education programs and other outreach totaled more than \$575,000. Block Management cooperators also received more than \$143,000 for weed management projects. About \$160,000 went to Off-Highway Vehicle Grant projects with weed management plans in place.

Brucellosis Update

Brucellosis is a risk to livestock and of concern to wildlife populations. FWP, responding to an apparent increase in the exposure of elk to brucellosis, will initiate a federally funded study to expand efforts to identify where brucellosis occurs in elk in southwestern Montana. In the past 30 years, FWP tested about 8,000 elk for brucellosis exposure, mostly in the Greater Yellowstone Area north and west of the national park. The results of those tests showed brucellosis exposure rates ranging from 0 to 2 percent in the early 1990s. Depending on the testing technique used, more recent positive exposure rates ranged between five and 16 percent in areas north of Gardiner and on the east side of the Madison Valley.



Aquatic invasive species can be spread on the felt soles of wading boots worn by trout anglers, fisheries workers and others who spend time in streams and rivers. Major manufacturers are introducing new rubber-soled boots. Montana State University research on angler movement found anglers' boots moved 6,300 pounds of sediment between access sites in southwestern Montana annually. The study also suggests nonresident anglers could carry more than 1,600 pounds of sediment into Montana.



Fish Creek

The Fish Creek acquisition, 40,900 acres 40 miles west of Missoula, is home to at least 182 wildlife species. The site ensures outdoor opportunities for camping, hiking, hunting, angling, wildlife viewing, trail use and recreational access to whitewater floating on Alberton Gorge.

Pine Grove Pond

The nearly 13-acre Pine Grove Pond Fishing Access Site, two miles north of Kalispell along the Whitefish River, was largely donated to the public by a private landowner for use as a Family Fishing Pond. A grant from the Montana Fish and Game Conservation Trust also provided funds.

Riverdale Ranch

A conservation easement on the 850-acre Riverdale Ranch, five miles south of Ulm in Cascade County, ensures important riparian and wetland habitats will remain unchanged in this historic area and that the public can enjoy hunting and wildlife viewing here in perpetuity. FWP partners who helped make this project possible include the landowner, the USDA Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program, PPL Montana, Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust, National Wild Turkey Foundation, Safari Club International and Pheasants Forever.

Marshall Creek

This 24,000-acre Wildlife Management Area, north of Seeley Lake, is prime bull trout spawning and lynx habitat previously owned by Plum Creek Timber. Public comment favored this acquisition as did the Missoula County Commissioners, the Seeley-Swan ATV Club, Montana Wildlife Federation, the Seeley Lake Community Council, Pyramid Mountain Lumber and Montana Trout Unlimited.

West Swan Valley Conservation Project

About 9,500 acres formerly owned by Plum Creek Timber Company in Lake County will benefit from conservation easements that ensure continued public recreational access. In addition, the easements will conserve important bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout streams, deer, elk, moose, grizzly bear, black bear and other species.

Moline Ranch

A conservation easement on Moline Ranch, a 4,900 acre ranch 20 miles east of Geraldine in eastern Chouteau County, is prime habitat for waterfowl and water-dependent wildlife as well as a variety of other species. The easement on these lands provides the only recreational and public hunting access to 14,200 acres of school trust and BLM lands.



Fish Creek WMA and state park



Marshall Creek WMA



West Swan Valley Conservation Project



Moline Ranch conservation easement

“I’m glad to see that there will be a responsible landowner for Fish Creek. I am in support of this acquisition. I feel your objectives are right on track.”

—DENLEY LOGE, MINERAL COUNTY RANCHER

“I and Pyramid Lumber strongly support FWP acquiring the lands. FWP has been a good neighbor and supporter of the Seeley community. This project also fits well with Pyramid Lumber’s history of supporting stewardship of the land.”

—GORDY SANDERS, RESOURCE MANAGER, PYRAMID MOUNTAIN LUMBER INC.



Mountain plover

Comprehensive Plan

Montana's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy analyzes more than 600 species of birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, crayfish and mussel, where they live, how they are doing and where more information is needed. The plan is the basis for FWP's long-term, results-oriented conservation partnerships and a requirement for the more than \$10.2 million in federal State Wildlife Grant funding received in Montana.

- To view the complete conservation strategy plan, click here ►►
- A public report on the ongoing work is available at "Conservation in Action." Click here ►►

Swift Fox

FWP moved about 20 swift fox from northeastern and north central Montana to suitable habitat on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, following similar relo-

cations in 2006 and 2009. The cooperative project between FWP and the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes will restore a culturally important species to tribal lands and expand the range of the species.

Bighorn Sheep Strategy Adopted

FWP completed the state's first comprehensive 10-year Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep conservation strategy. The plan sets eight statewide objectives and offers key narrative histories of all existing herds.

Classification Of Exotic Species

Montana classified 24 exotic species in 2010. The import, possession and sale of exotic species are regulated to minimize potential health and safety risks to humans, wildlife, livestock and agriculture. Species not yet classified cannot be imported into Montana.

- A full list of classified exotic species is available here ►►



Swift fox release

Behind The Scenes

“Behind the scenes” tours of Montana’s celebrated fisheries are rare. Few anglers know how FWP:

- performs an annual population survey on fish;
- tags fish and monitors their movements and use of habitat;
- collects and fertilizes Yellowstone cutthroat trout eggs for hatchery rearing;
- restores fish habitat for native species; or
- plants hatchery fish in a reservoir or pond.

To remedy that, FWP provides a visual tour of fisheries management in action on the FWP website.

► [Click here to visit the site](#) ►

Upper Missouri River Reservoir Fisheries Management Plan

The FWP Commission adopted a new 10-year fisheries management plan for the upper Missouri River and reservoir system that stretches from Toston to Holter Dam. An 18-member workgroup made recommendations key to the new plan. The plan includes sideboards for setting walleye regulations on Canyon Ferry Reservoir.



Fishing at Tongue River Reservoir State Park

Future Fisheries Improvement Program

The Future Fisheries Review Panel and the FWP Commission approved funding for 33 restoration projects totaling \$1.21 million. This funding will generate an additional \$6.67 million in matching contributions. Funded projects include:

- fish screens to prevent loss of fish down irrigation diversions;
- fish migration barriers to protect native cutthroat trout;
- restoration of channels damaged by historic mining activities;
- riparian protection, in-stream flow enhancement;
- fish passage improvements at road crossings and in-channel habitat enhancements.

► To view completed Future Fisheries Improvement Program projects, [click here](#) ►

Fishing Access Sites

The Fishing Access Site program acquired four new sites totaling 18 acres. The sites are on the Madison River near Norris, the Shields River south of Clyde Park, the Gallatin River near Logan, and a kids’ fishing pond in Kalispell. This brings the number of Montana fishing access sites to 336. In addition:

- six new boat ramps were constructed;
- two sites were developed and opened to the public;
- \$90,686 in PPL Montana grants went to acquire new sites and maintain existing ones; and
- safety at railroad track crossings was improved through work with Montana Rail Line and the BNSF railroads.



Brown trout



2010 Hunting Season

Opening day of the 2010 general rifle season was on a Saturday—giving hunters a full opening weekend of hunting. The new youth-only early deer season was on the Thursday and Friday before the general opener. The youth hunt makes it easier for young hunters to participate and possibly get their first deer. Montana’s youth waterfowl and pheasant weekend was September 25-26 for licensed hunters age 12 to 15.

SuperTag

The SuperTag, first offered in 2006, is a super success. FWP offers \$5 lottery chances on one SuperTag for a moose, bighorn sheep, elk, deer, mountain goat, mountain lion, pronghorn antelope, and bison hunt annually. Residents and nonresidents can buy an unlimited number of chances on the species of their choice. While making coveted hunting opportunities accessible, the SuperTag brings in about \$300,000 annually for improved public hunting access and law enforcement.



Fishing Access Sites Please Hunters

Hunters are finding Montana’s fishing access sites—many with rich riparian bottomland along water and nearby upland grasslands—are ideal wildlife habitat for white-tailed deer, sharp-tailed grouse, doves, wild turkeys, sandhill cranes, waterfowl and pheasants. In fall, hunters are outnumbering anglers at some of the state’s 336 FASs. Hunting is legal on most fishing access sites and any restrictions are posted at entrance roads and in the free “Fishing Access Site Field Guide” available from FWP.

Come Home To Hunt

The new Come Home To Hunt deer or deer and elk combination licenses are for nonresidents who previously purchased resident Montana hunting licenses or passed the state’s hunter education course. The hunters must be sponsored by a legal Montana resident who has a valid Montana hunting license. In its first year, 495 licenses were sold. Funds from these licenses are earmarked for securing access across private land to public land.

2010 License Auction Results and Auctioning Organization

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|--|
| Moose | \$11,000 | Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation |
| Bighorn Ram..... | \$275,000 | Wild Sheep Foundation |
| Mountain Goat | \$ 17,000 | Safari Club International of Great Falls |
| Elk | \$ 12,000 | Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation |
| Deer | \$ 9,000 | Mule Deer Foundation |

A Boon To The Montana Economy

Visitors to Montana State Parks spent \$289 million statewide during 2010, according to an economic impact study conducted by Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research—an increase of 35 percent since 2002 when the last study was completed. Nonresident visitors spent an average of \$147 per day per group on gasoline, lodging, meals, gifts, and other items. With a majority of goods and services purchased within a 50-mile radius of parks, that’s a significant impact to communities like Jordan, Dillon, Glendive, and Whitehall. The study also showed that visitation by Montana residents to state parks has increased 72 percent since 2002.

Camping and state park experiences remained an attractive option for families in 2010. Visitation was steady at 1.98 million visits, the second highest in the past 10 years.

Creating Partnerships With Communities

State parks continue to generate economic development with communities by producing special events such as the equestrian competition at Pirogue Island near Miles City that attracted 54 entrants from four states, creating new recreational opportunities at the Milltown Dam, and assuming management of Travelers’ Rest State Park in Lolo.

Recreation and Trails

The Recreation Bureau administered over \$1.6 million in grant funding from four different outdoor recreation grant programs. Funds from these programs are used for outdoor recreation infrastructure on public lands—such as playground equipment, park renovations, grooming of snowmobile trails, urban trail development, backcountry trail maintenance, trail signs, and trails safety-and ethics education.

Operations

The Parks Division issued 41 construction and engineering contracts statewide totaling \$2.22 million. These projects in state parks and fishing access sites resulted in employment for Montanans, increased income for local vendors in a variety of communities, and other economic benefits.

More than 20,000 school children participated in interpretive programs at state parks to learn more about Montana’s history, culture, and natural environment.

State Park heritage sites also received attention:

- restoration work was completed on the iconic Meade Hotel in Bannack,
- an historic crumbling rock wall was reconstructed at Giant Springs in Great Falls,
- a piece of basketry from Pictograph Cave was carbon dated at 1,371 + years of age, and
- a National Park Service grant enabled work to begin on the National Historic Landmark nomination of First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park.

Enhanced Services And Facilities

Volunteers continue to substantially enhance the Montana State Parks experience by their valuable service as campground hosts, maintenance workers, and interpreters. In the Kalispell region, half of all staffing hours were contributed by volunteers.

Visitors are enjoying enhanced services at several campgrounds, including electrical hookups and overdue site upgrades at Beavertail Hill, Lake Mary Ronan, Salmon Lake, Placid Lake, and West Shore state parks. A new campground was built at Brush Lake State Park near Plentywood to provide services to eastern Montana residents where few state parks exist. These enhancements also help generate revenue for the state parks system.



Salmon Lake State Park



Makoshika State Park accepted a donation of 160 acres within the park that was privately owned by the McCarty family.



Wayfarers State Park



Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park



Logan State Park



Crucial Areas Planning System

FWP won a special achievement award from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for creating and launching the Crucial Areas Planning System. FWP's Crucial Areas Planning System, or CAPS, is a new FWP information tool that can help those involved in development or conservation projects to consider Montana's fish, wildlife and recreational resources early in the planning process. CAPS contains maps and data identifying and ranking Montana's fish and wildlife habitat.

► Click here to visit the Crucial Areas Planning System on-line ►

Information Technology

Data is core to nearly everything FWP does—from managing fish and game populations to communicating with the public. In the past, data was collected and housed in a variety of formats and locations. All that began to change in 2010 with the Fish & Wildlife Information System. FWIS is already beginning to transform how FWP does business by moving data to centralized storage and linking it electronically to the business processes that need it. The streamlined collection, analysis and decision making that FWIS is making possible will save significant staff time, reduce errors, and better link the agency with Montanans by making more information available on the Internet and through various communications devices.

Video Conferencing Capabilities

FWP headquarters and the seven regional offices are now equipped with interactive video conference capabilities so Montanans across the state can participate in FWP Commission meetings at their regional FWP offices. The facilities also reduce the need for travel by FWP staff.

eRegulations

Montana's hunters are learning all about what an eBook is because the state's hunting regulations are now offered in the eBook format. That means they can be read off of a computer screen, a laptop, eBook reader or palm pilots and organizers. Readers can "turn" the electronic pages. Not all eBooks are free but these are, so for a fun new experience come to the FWP website and try out the "eRegulations."

► Click here to view available FWP eBooks ►

Streaming Audio Of FWP Commission Meetings

► To tune into the audio portion of FWP Commission meetings, click here ►

Shooting Ranges

Montana has more than 150 shooting ranges, many in small communities where the range may be one of the few family recreational facilities available. FWP, through the Shooting Range Grant Program, provided more than \$300,000 to private shooting clubs, organizations, local governments and school districts to improve or build new shooting ranges. Montana communities that benefited in the past biennium from projects include: Denton, Glasgow, Great Falls, Havre, Lewistown, Missoula, Ronan, and Rudyard.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman

FWP's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program helps women gain new outdoor skills through workshops on fly fishing, horse packing, flower identification, ice fishing, snowshoeing, upland game bird hunting and much more.

In a recent FWP survey of Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program participants, of the women who attended a fishing class:

- 92 percent said their BOW experience helped



BOW Workshop

improve their fishing skills,

- 86 percent said it improved their confidence enough to go fishing in the future.
- Only 25 percent fished frequently before their BOW experience—but after a BOW class 41 percent said they frequently fish.

Of the BOW survey respondents who attended a hunting-related class:

- 80 percent said that BOW experiences helped improve their hunting skills,
- 86 percent said BOW improved their confidence in hunting.
- More than 30 percent frequently hunted before their BOW class. After their BOW experience, 46 percent said they frequently hunted as a direct result of BOW.

Overall satisfaction with BOW was 99 percent among survey respondents, and 86 percent of past BOW attendees said they have encouraged others to sign up for BOW courses.



Helena Trap Range

Game wardens

Montana's game wardens' work includes compliance, investigative and other enforcement duties; collecting biological and hunter use information; landowner assistance; public access efforts; public presentations and hunter education programs. Over the past year, FWP wardens:

- Contacted an estimated 86,500 hunters and anglers in the field;
- over 30,000 boat, snowmobile and OHV users;
- 14,500 park users; and
- more than 9,000 landowner contacts regarding violations, block management and game damage;
- issued 9400 verbal and written warnings;
- wrote 4400 citations; and
- participated in more than 800 hunter education and public presentations.

Major wildlife crime

The Enforcement Bureau continued its focus on unlawful commercialization of Montana's wild resources. This million-dollar, illicit "industry"

robs legitimate hunters and anglers of resources and opportunities. Major investigations have resulted in convictions for a wide range of violations including illegal outfitting, unlawful purchase and transfer of licenses and over limits. Convictions resulted in thousands of dollars in fines, restitution and loss of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for extended periods, or for life.

TIP-MONT

Once again, the TIP-MONT program exceeded the previous years' calls, receiving more than 2,000 calls from citizens reporting unlawful wildlife and fishing activity. Waste of game was the most frequently reported violation. Rewards for TIP-MONT reports exceeded \$16,000.

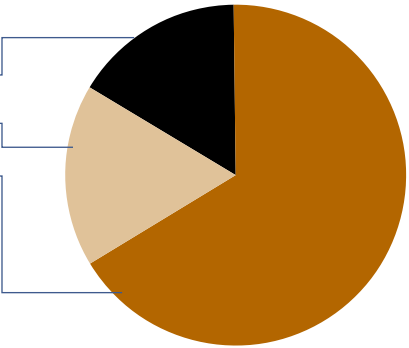
Bridge access

FWP wardens continued to be involved in enhancing access at bridge sites across the state. Soon, an interactive point and click page on the FWP website will identify public bridge access sites across the state.



2011 PLANNED EXPENDITURES:

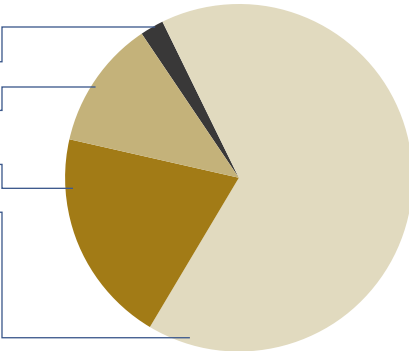
| | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Management & Finance Division..... | 16.2% |
| Parks Division..... | 17.3% |
| Fish & Wildlife Division | 66.5% |



2011 DEPARTMENT REVENUE

This is an illustration of FWP’s funding. Actual annual revenues from these sources may fall above or below the figures used here.

| | | |
|---|-------|--------------|
| Statutory | 2.2% | \$1,953,732 |
| Other State Revenue..... | 12% | \$10,511,513 |
| Federal Funds | 20% | \$17,437,281 |
| Hunting and Fishing Licenses..... | 65.8% | \$57,561,539 |
| <small>(33 percent derived from resident licenses and 67 percent from nonresident licenses)</small> | | |
| DEPARTMENT TOTAL: | 100% | \$87,464,065 |



2011 FISH AND WILDLIFE DIVISION REVENUE

The Fish and Wildlife Division includes five programs: Wildlife, Communication and Education, Fisheries, Law Enforcement, and Strategic Planning and Data Services. The programs are funded by statutory revenue, hunting and fishing license revenue, other state revenue and federal funds.

Statutory Revenue

Statutory revenue is revenue appropriated specifically by Montana law—for example, to support operations, maintenance and forest management on the state’s wildlife management areas.

Hunting And Fishing License Revenue

This license revenue source includes all license sales, interest earnings and miscellaneous revenues. About two-thirds of FWP’s license revenue comes from nonresident license sales.

Other State Revenue

The Fish and Wildlife Division receives revenue from other state sources. For example, the nongame income tax check-off contributions made by taxpayers supports nongame species management and improved wildlife viewing opportunities.

Federal Funds

More than \$12.8 million comes from an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, handguns and certain archery equipment (Pittman-Robertson). About \$9.26 million in federal funding comes from an excise tax on fishing equipment and electric trolling motors, a federal fuel tax and import duties on fishing tackle and pleasure boats (Dingell-Johnson).

Montana received \$1.3 million in 2010 from the State Wildlife Grant Program to help fund research and management programs for species that have special conservation needs.

2011 PARKS DIVISION REVENUE

The Parks Division is composed of three programs: Montana State Parks, trails and community grants, and fishing access site management. The programs are funded by statutory revenue, state parks earned revenue, hunting and fishing license revenue, other state revenue and federal revenue.

Statutory Revenue

State Parks Maintenance: Under state law, 6.5 percent of the four percent Lodging Facility Use Tax charged by lodging facilities goes to maintain state parks.

Parks/FAS Maintenance: an amount equaling 20 percent of the purchase price of a property is set aside to fund weed control and maintenance of new state parks and fishing access sites, as an expansion of the state good neighbor policy.

State Parks Earned Revenue

Parks’ earned revenues include entry fees, camping, special use fees and a light vehicle registration fee on passenger cars and light trucks. Of the \$4 light vehicle registration fee, \$3.50 goes to state parks, \$0.25 to

fishing access sites and another \$0.25 to the Montana Department of Commerce.

Sales of educational, commemorative and interpretive merchandise, as well as other goods and services at state parks and other designated locations, provide this revenue.

Other State Revenue

Coal Tax Trust Earnings: A portion of the interest earned from the Coal Tax Trust account goes to develop, operate and maintain the state park system.

Motorboat Fuel Tax: Revenue from the state gasoline dealers’ license tax is used to create, improve and maintain state parks where motorboats are allowed.

Off-highway vehicle and snowmobile registration and decal fees: These fees support the OHV and snowmobile programs.

Fuel Tax: A portion of the state gasoline dealers’ license tax supports OHV and snowmobile safety, education and grants to local users’ clubs for equipment and trail maintenance.

Hunting And Fishing License Revenue

A portion of hunting and fishing license sales goes to operate, maintain and develop fishing access sites statewide.

Federal Revenue

Federal funding from the sale of fishing equipment and tackle (Wallop-Breaux) helps support fishing access sites and state parks where motorboats are allowed.

Additional federal funding for state and local parks comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Governor of the State of Montana

Brian Schweitzer

FWP Director

Joe Maurier

FWP Commission

Shane Colton, *Southeastern Montana*

Willie Doll,* *Northeastern Montana*

Ron Moody, *Northcentral Montana*

Bob Ream, Chairman, *Northwestern Montana*

Dan Vermillion,* Vice Chairman, *Southwestern Montana*

*Term expires Jan. 2011

► For more information, visit fwp.mt.gov ►►



Montana Outdoors is FWP’s full-color magazine featuring the latest information on conservation issues, new management programs and fishing, hunting and parks recreation. A one-year subscription (six issues) is \$9. Call toll-free (800) 678-6668, or subscribe on-line: ► fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors ►►

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